

Hobbs, NM – Today, Harry Teague announced funding for a program that will bring improved forensic DNA casework systems to New Mexico. The grant, awarded by the National Institute of Justice, will help local law enforcement utilize the full potential of DNA technology by improving forensic DNA turnaround time, reducing DNA forensic casework backlogs and preventing future backlogs. The program helps increase the efficiency and impact that DNA laws, like Teague's national "Katie's Law", can have in the law enforcement community.

The \$410,730 funding will allow eligible states and local governments to increase the capacity of their existing crime laboratories that conduct DNA analysis in order to analyze DNA samples more efficiently and cost effectively. Eligible states may also request funds to handle, screen, and analyze backlogged forensic DNA casework samples.

"DNA is the finger print of the 21st century, and is essential to helping law enforcement keep New Mexican communities safe. But in order to keep dangerous criminals off the street, we must ensure that our crime laboratories have the resources they need to quickly process cases," said Harry Teague. "This is why I want to make New Mexico's "Katie's Law" the law of the land - to give local and state law enforcement across the country the DNA technology tools they need and deserve to protect our citizens."

Harry Teague, a strong supporter of the use of forensic DNA in violent crime cases, introduced the Katie Sepich Enhanced DNA Collection Act (H.R. 4614), or "Katie's Law" bill, a bipartisan bill that encourages states to maximize the potential of forensic DNA to solve and prevent violent crimes by collecting a DNA sample upon arrest at the same time as fingerprints -- for certain felony crimes. Teague worked with Katie's parents, Jayann and David Sepich of Carlsbad to take this New Mexico law to the federal level, where it passed the US House of Representatives and awaits consideration in the Senate.

Katie's Law is named after Katie Sepich, from Carlsbad, New Mexico. Katie was 22 years old when she was brutally raped and murdered in Las Cruces, New Mexico. If New Mexico had at that time required a DNA sample to be taken upon arrest, Katie's killer would have been caught three months after the murder when the murderer was arrested for another predatory crime.

Instead, the killer was released back onto the streets, it was three long years before he was finally apprehended again and linked to Katie's murder.

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